

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 144689

EXDIS

FOL RPT TEL AVIV 4436 ACTION SECSTATE, AMEMB AMMAN, AMEMB CAIRO,
AMEMB DAMASCUS, AMEMB JERUSALEM, AMEMB JIDDA, AMEMB LONDON
DATED 20 JUN 77

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 4436

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IS

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER-DESIGNATE MENAHEM
BEGIN

1. I SAW BEGIN ALONE AT HIS TEL AVIV APARTMENT FOR ABOUT
AN HOUR ON JUNE 19, JUST BEFORE HE SIGNED THE FINAL
AGREEMENT WITH HIS COALITION PARTNERS. IT WAS A VERY
RELAXED CONVERSATION ABOUT THE OUTLOOK FOR HIS NEW
GOVERNMENT AND HIS TRIP NEXT MONTH TO THE US. WE HAVE
NOW ESTABLISHED AN EASY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.
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HIGHLIGHTS FOLLOW.

2. BEGIN RASISED SOMEWHAT QUIZZICALLY SOME ANONYMOUS
QUOTES HE HAD SEEN IN THE ISRAELI PRESS OF ALLEGED
STATEMENTS BY US STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS TO EFFECT
THAT THE US VERY MUCH HOPED THE DMC WOULD BECOME PART
OF BEGIN'S COALITION. HE SUGGESTED GENTLY THAT HE

THOUGHT IT WAS INAPPROPRIATE FOR US OFFICIALS TO INTERFERE IN THIS WAY IN THE RATHER DELICATE INTERNAL MATTER OF THE FORMATION OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT COALITION. HOWEVER, HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE ALSO WAS ANXIOUS TO HAVE THE DMC JOIN, AND INDEED THOUGHT THERE WAS STILL A GOOD CHANCE THAT THEY WOULD DO SO. HE IS LEAVING OPEN THE SLOT OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, PLUS THREE OTHER MINISTRIES: JUSTICE, SOCIAL WELFARE (WHICH WILL SUBSUME THE WORK OF THREE EXISTING MINISTRIES), AND POSTS AND COMMUNICATIONS. HE WILL HOLD THESE SLOTS FOR PERHAPS FOUR TO FIVE WEEKS TO HAVE THEM AVAILABLE FOR THE DMC. HE EXPECTS NEGOTIATIONS MAY WELL BEGIN AGAIN SHORTLY AFTER HIS GOVERNMENT IS SWORN IN.

3. BEGIN TALKED AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT SOME OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH HAD ARISEN IN HIS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE DMC, CONFIRMING INDICATIONS WE HAVE HAD FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THE NEGOTIATING SESSIONS WERE PLAGUED WITH A NUMBER OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS. HE OBVIOUSLY DID NOT THINK THE DMC HAD CORRECTLY ASSESSED THEIR OWN NEGOTIATING LEVERAGE GIVEN THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION, AND THAT WITH MORE TIME TO ABSORB THE REALITY OF THEIR SITUATION WOULD BE MORE "REASONABLE". HE IS STILL RANKLED BY A STATEMENT PROFESSOR RUBENSTEIN MADE PUBLICLY A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE ELECTION TO THE EFFECT THAT IT WOULD BE THE DMC WHICH WOULD FORM THE NEXT
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GOVERNMENT, "REGARDLESS OF WHO ITS JUNIOR PARTNER MIGHT BE."

4. WHETHER THE DMC ENTERS OR NOT, BEGIN SEEMS CONFIDENT THAT HIS COALITION WILL BE SUFFICIENT FOR A STABLE GOVERNMENT AND HE CITES A NUMBER OF OTHER DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES WHERE GOVERNMENTS ARE OPERATING WITH EVEN NARROWER MARGINS.

5. IN DISCUSSING THE FUTURE OF NEGOTIATIONS, I GAVE BEGIN A COPY OF THE TEXT OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE'S SPEECH ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND URGED HIM TO READ IT CAREFULLY, CALLING ATTENTION TO CERTAIN KEY PASSAGES. I SUGGESTED THAT IT PROVIDED AS GOOD A RATIONALE AND GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S APPROACH AS HE WAS LIKELY TO FIND, AND THAT I KNEW HE WOULD WANT TO THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT IT BEFORE HIS MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON. HE ASSURED ME HE WOULD GIVE IT A VERY CAREFUL READING. BEGIN REPEATED WHAT HE HAD TOLD ME IN HIS FIRST MEETING ABOUT HIS INTENTION TO REINVIGORATE THE ROLE OF THE KNESSET. FOR EXAMPLE, HE PLANS TO AVOID MAKING ANY PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENTS TO OUTSIDE

GROUPS OR TO THE PRESS BEFORE HE HAS MADE THEM IN THE KNESSET ITSELF, AND HE CAREFULLY POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD BEEN COMPLETELY SILENT IN PUBLIC DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS PRESERVING HIS POLICY STATEMENT FOR HIS SPEECH TO THE KNESSET WHEN HE PRESENTS HIS GOVERNMENT JUNE 20. (INCIDENTALLY, HE SAID THIS IS ONLY THE SECOND SPEECH IN HIS ENTIRE LIFE WHICH HE HAS WRITTEN OUT IN ADVANCE.)

6. BEFORE LEAVING I MENTIONED SENATOR STONE'S COMMENTS IN WASHINGTON ABOUT HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH BEGIN. BEGIN ASSURED ME STONE HAD QUOTED HIM CORRECTLY: THAT "NOTHING IS NON-NEGOTIABLE," AND THAT WHEN THE GENEVA CONFERENCE IS RECONVENED ON THE BASIS OF SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, WE WILL PARTICIPATE ON THAT

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BASIS. (INCIDENTALLY, THIS PHRASEOLOGY WAS ADDED AT THE LAST MINUTE TO THE FORMAL GOVERNMENT POLICY STATEMENT PUBLISHED IN TODAY'S PRESS, REPORTEDLY AT THE INSISTENCE OF LIBERAL LEADER SIMCHA EHRLICH WHO BELIEVES IT WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE DMC TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION AND RETURN TO NEGOTIATIONS.) IN EXPLAINING HIS POSITION ON THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, BEGIN SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW ONE COULD NOT NEGOTIATE EITHER AT A PRESS CONFERENCE OR ON TELEVISION WITH ANYONE. WHEN THE PARTIES GET TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE, HOWEVER, EACH SHOULD BE FREE TO MAKE ITS OWN PROPOSALS. SO LONG AS OTHERS, SUCH AS SADAT, INSIST ON SAYING PUBLICLY WHERE THEY BELIEVE ISRAEL'S BORDERS SHOULD BE FIXED, IT WILL BE HIS DUTY TO MAKE HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION PUBLICLY KNOWN AS WELL. "EITHER ALL REMAIN QUIET, OR NONE CAN BE." HE OBVIOUSLY WOULD PREFER TO RESERVE ALL DEBATE ABOUT BORDERS FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE.

7. BEGIN IS LOOKING FORWARD GREATLY TO HIS WASHINGTON TRIP, AND IS SEEMINGLY RELAXED AND CONFIDENT ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR HIS NEW CABINET.
LEWIS UNQUOTE VANCE

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